THE TALE OF FRISKY SQUIRREL

By

Arthur Scott Bailey

SLEEPY-TIME TALES

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Contents

I. Frisky Squirrel Finds Much To Do
II. Frisky Squirrel has a Fall
III. The Stone that Walked
IV. The Picnic
V. Some Lively Dodging
VI. Mr. Hawk Returns
VII. A Brave Little Bird
VIII. Uncle Sammy Coon
IX. A Bag of Corn
X. Tails and Ears
XI. Jimmy Rabbit is too Late
XII. Frisky Visits the Gristmill
XIII. Fun on the Milldam
XIV. Mrs. Squirrel Has a Visitor
XV. Helpful Mr. Crow
XVI. Caught in the Attic
XVII. Farmer Green's Cat
XVIII. The Threshing-machine
XIX. Frisky's Prison
XX. Johnnie Green Forgets Something
XXI. That Disagreeable Freddie Weasel
XXII. Catching Freddie Weasel Asleep

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THE TALE OF FRISKY SQUIRREL

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1

• Frisky Squirrel • Finds Much To Do

Frisky Squirrel was a lively little chap. And he was very bold, too. You see, he was so nimble that he felt he could always jump right out of danger—no matter whether it was a hawk chasing him, or a fox springing at him, or a boy throwing stones at him. He would chatter and scold at his enemies from some tree-top. And it was seldom that he was so frightened that he ran home and hid inside his mother's house.

Mrs. Squirrel's house was in a hollow limb of a hickory tree. It was a very convenient place to live; for although the tree was old, it still bore nuts. And it is very pleasant to be able to step out of your house and find your dinner all ready for you—simply waiting to be picked.

Of course, Frisky Squirrel and his mother couldn't find their dinner on the tree the whole year 'round—because it was only in the fall that there were nuts on it. But luckily there were other things to eat—such as seeds, of which there were many kinds in the woods. And then there was Farmer Green's wheat—and his corn, too, which Frisky liked most of all.

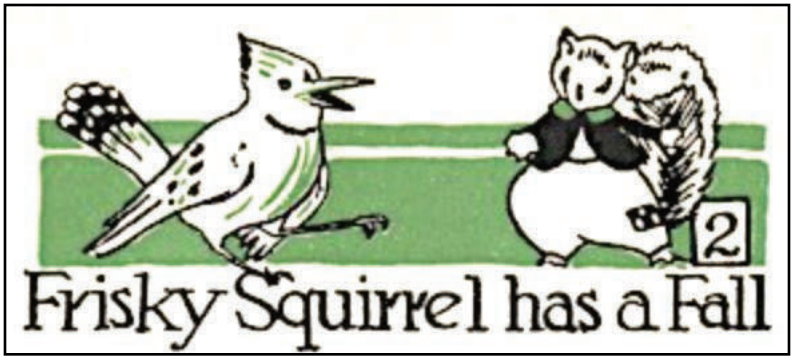
The woods where Mrs. Squirrel and her son lived were full of the finest trees to climb that anybody could wish for. And Frisky loved to go leaping from branch to branch, and from tree to tree. He was so fearless that he would scamper far out on the ends of the smallest limbs. But no matter how much they bent and swayed beneath his weight, he was never afraid; in fact, that was part of the fun.

As she watched Frisky whisking about among the trees, now swinging on this branch, now leaping far out to that one, Mrs. Squirrel sometimes wondered how he could keep dashing about so madly. Though the old lady was pretty spry, herself, she was content to sit still *some* of the time. But Frisky Squirrel was almost never still except when he was asleep. There was so much to do! Frisky wished that the days were longer, for though he tried his hardest, he couldn't climb *all* the trees in the forest. Each night he had to give up his task, only to

begin all over again the next morning. If there had been nothing to do but *climb* the trees Frisky would have been able to climb more of them. But there were other things that took time.

There were the birds, for instance. Frisky simply had to tease them. Perhaps it was just because he was so full of fun—or mischief, as it is sometimes called. Anyhow, he delighted in visiting their nests; and chasing them; and scolding at them. And it was not always the littlest birds, either, that Frisky teased. There was that loud-mouthed fellow, Jasper Jay, the biggest blue jay in the whole neighborhood. Frisky liked nothing better than bothering Jasper Jay—for Jasper always lost his temper and flew straight at Frisky. And then would follow the finest sport of all.

But a time came at last when Frisky teased Jasper Jay almost once too often, though that is another story.



One day Frisky Squirrel came upon Jasper Jay's nest when Jasper and his wife were both away from home. And Frisky simply couldn't resist tearing a few twigs out of it. He had not done much damage, however, before Mrs. Jay returned. When she saw what was happening she screamed loudly for her husband. And soon Jasper came flying up as fast as he could come. He made a noise exactly like a red-tailed hawk; but he did not frighten Frisky at all, for Frisky knew all of Jasper's tricks. Jasper Jay was always trying to scare people by calling like bigger birds—such as red-shouldered hawks, and red-tailed hawks, and sparrow hawks.

When Frisky heard him calling he just laughed and skipped up the trunk of the tree, with Jasper and his wife chasing him. Now, with Jasper and Mrs. Jay both flying at him, Frisky had to be sprier than ever. But he was not afraid. He never thought of danger at all. And

he ran down the thick tree-trunk like a flash and bounded across the ground and tore up the tree where he and his mother lived.

“I’ll peck your eyes out!” Jasper shouted, as he followed close behind Frisky. Now, no matter how bold one may be, it is not pleasant to hear a thing like that said. And it made Frisky hurry a little faster.

“I’ll peck his tongue out!” screamed Mrs. Jay. And somehow it disturbed Frisky the least bit to hear Jasper’s wife say that. He decided that he would go home at once. And he gave a great spring toward the hollow limb where he lived.

Then something happened that was a great surprise to Frisky Squirrel. He was right in the middle of his leap when Jasper struck him with a wing. The blow did not hurt Frisky. But it sent him tumbling. He missed the hollow limb, and down he went, head over heels, toward the ground.

Even while he was falling, Frisky Squirrel laughed. You see, he thought it was a good joke on himself. And being a merry little fellow, he was always ready to laugh when anybody played a joke on him. As for the fall, that did not trouble him at all. He knew that he could land on his feet.

It was after he had lighted upon the ground that Frisky was really frightened.

For when he looked up, whom should he see but Tommy Fox, not three jumps away! And Tommy Fox was smiling in the most horrid fashion, as if to say—"Ah! I've got you now, my fine fellow!" And then Tommy Fox leaped.

But quick as Tommy was, Frisky Squirrel was even quicker. While Tommy was making one big leap, Frisky was making three smaller leaps. And when Tommy came down on the spot where Frisky had been he found nothing but a heap of dry leaves beneath his paws; and in a moment more Frisky Squirrel's gray tail was disappearing through the doorway of his mother's house.

It was very unlucky for Tommy Fox; but then, one might say that it was very lucky for Frisky Squirrel.

One day Frisky Squirrel was playing in the woods when he came upon a chestnut bur which had lain upon the ground all winter. And in a twinkling Frisky had picked the nut from inside it and popped it into his mouth. Then he started home to show his mother what he had found.

But on the way home Frisky began to feel hungry. Just carrying that nut inside his cheek was a little more than he could stand. And he decided that he would eat the nut at once, and *tell* his mother about it, instead of *showing* it to her.

So Frisky hopped up on the top of a broad, flat rock. And sitting down right in the center of it, he began to gnaw at the chestnut. He was so busy and so interested in what he was doing that before he knew it the rock began to move. It moved so slowly that it was not until it

started to climb a little hummock, and nearly tipped Frisky over on his back, that he noticed what was happening.

At first Frisky thought he must be dreaming. He nipped himself with his sharp teeth to make sure that he was awake. And when he saw that the rock was really walking right away with him he forgot all about eating the chestnut. He let it fall out of his paws and roll away; for he had never seen a rock move like that before.

It was very exciting, though Frisky had never traveled so slowly before. You see, whenever he went anywhere he always hurried as if he had the most important business to attend to. But it was quite different with that rock. It crawled along just as if it didn't care whether it ever got anywhere or not.

For a long time Frisky clung there. Now and then he almost slipped off as the rock tilted. But it never tipped quite over; and Frisky managed to stick on. And then, at last, he decided that he had better hop off onto the ground, for he noticed that the rock was moving straight toward the river. It went down the bank at a faster pace. And Frisky leaped off just in time to escape a wetting, for the next moment the rock dropped splash! into the water.

Frisky Squirrel waited on the shore and watched it, with eyes wide open with astonishment. He had expected to see it sink to the bottom of the river. But the rock swam away as easily as you please. That was the strangest part

of it all—a rock which could not only walk, but could swim as well!

Frisky turned about and ran for home as fast as he could jump. This time he certainly did have important business. He had such a strange thing to tell his mother! He reached home quite out of breath. And as soon as he could, he told Mrs. Squirrel what he had seen.

That good lady did not know what to think. She had always found her son to be truthful. But this was certainly a queer story. She lay awake a long time that night thinking about the matter. And early the next morning she took Frisky and set out for Swift River. Frisky led her to the very spot where the stone had swum away.

“There it is! There it is now!” he cried, as they paused upon the bank and he pointed down toward the water’s edge.

When Mrs. Squirrel saw what Frisky was pointing at she no longer wondered.

“It’s a mud turtle!” she exclaimed. “You had a ride on a mud turtle and you never knew it.” She smiled, because she was amused; and because she was happy, too. For she knew that Frisky had told the truth.

It was a fine spring day—so pleasant that the children from the little red schoolhouse over the hill came to the woods where Frisky Squirrel lived. They came for the first picnic of the season, and such a noise as they made had never been heard in those woods before.

Frisky Squirrel was frightened at first. But at last he grew accustomed to the uproar, and he crept out on the limb where he lived—not too far away from the door—and looked down and watched the fun.

He was enjoying the picnic quite as much as the merry-makers themselves—until a boy spied him. And then several boys began to throw acorns at him. Frisky did not like that so well; and he hid in a crotch of the tree

where he could not be seen from below, until the boys forgot all about him.

When the picnickers went away, Frisky lost no time. He slipped down the tree in a hurry. You see, he had seen the children eating their lunch and he hoped he would be able to find some tidbit which they had left behind them.

Sure enough! there was a feast waiting for him. He was not the only one who was there to enjoy it. For there were three ruffianly red squirrels and a half-dozen chipmunks who appeared on the spot as if by magic.

This second picnic soon came to an end, for the dainties did not last long. But what Frisky found, he enjoyed very much.

Most of all he liked a bit of something that was covered with a white coating, which looked a good deal like snow. But it did not taste like snow at all; it was as sweet as sweet could be!

Rusty Red-squirrel found a piece of the same dainty, and he explained to Frisky that it was called “cake.”

“I ate some once at Farmer Green’s house,” he said. “Farmer Green’s wife makes it.” And Frisky decided on the spot that he would pay a visit to the farmhouse. It was too late to go that day. But the next morning Frisky set out for Farmer Green’s house.

In the distance he could see white smoke curling from the red chimney. And though he did not know it, that

meant that it was baking-day, and Farmer Green's wife was just as busy as she could be, making good things for her hungry family.

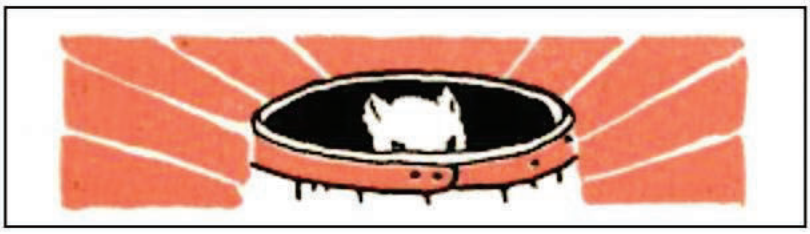
When Frisky Squirrel reached the farmhouse he found the kitchen window wide open. And after making sure that there was no one inside the room, he stole in and jumped up on a shelf where there was a row of dishes with all sorts of tempting things on them.

To Frisky's joy, he found a whole cake exactly like the bit he had discovered in the woods. And he ate all he wanted; there seemed to be no reason why he shouldn't, there was so much of it.

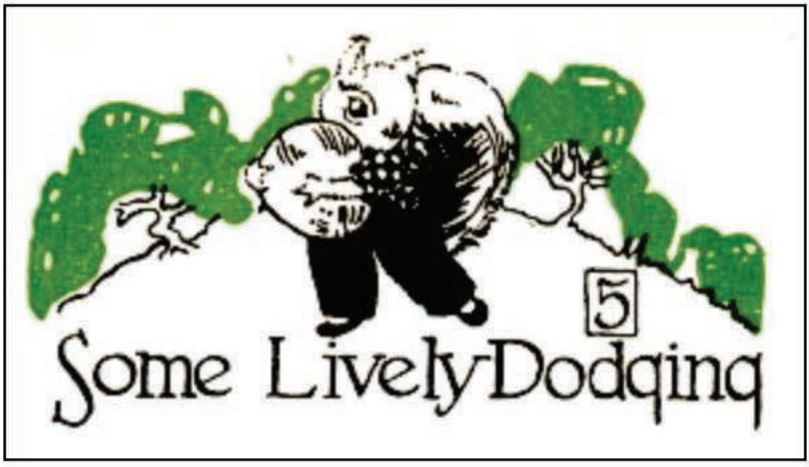
And then a door slammed somewhere. The noise startled Frisky Squirrel and he fell right off the shelf, backwards, and landed plump in the flour-barrel.

He was nearly smothered. And he was frightened, too. But he managed to scramble out again. And you should have seen the white streak that went shooting across the kitchen floor, out the door, and away. It was Frisky Squirrel, of course, covered with flour. He never stopped running until he was half-way home. And then he climbed a tree and sat down to lick himself clean again. To his astonishment, he found that the white powder that covered him tasted very good. It reminded him of wheat. And that is not surprising, since the flour was made of wheat which Farmer Green had grown in his own fields, and which had been ground into flour by the miller who lived further up Swift River.

Though the flour tasted good, Frisky did not like it as well as the cake. He wished he had been covered with that sweet, snowlike frosting.



"The Picnic"



Frisky Squirrel was having his usual fun, leaping through the tree-tops. He went skipping and scrambling among the boughs as if a hundred jays were after him. But they were only make-believe enemies. And after a while Frisky grew tired of playing all alone. He wished he could find Jasper Jay again. He would have liked to tease the rude fellow, until Jasper chased him.

As Frisky paused for a moment to catch his breath he heard a long-drawn, squealing whistle, somewhat like the sound of escaping steam.

“There’s Jasper Jay right now!” he exclaimed. “And he’s trying to make people think he’s a red-tailed hawk. But

he can't fool me that way. I'll just go and find him. And then maybe I won't tease him!"

Frisky started toward the place where he had heard that whistle. He called to Jasper Jay; but there was no answer. Nor did he hear the whistle again. He hunted all around; but no Jasper Jay could he find. And he was just going to give up the search when there was a sudden rush through the air.

Frisky dodged just in time; and a big body, grayish-brown, with a rusty-red tail, went tearing past him. He had been mistaken. It wasn't Jasper Jay he had heard whistling, but this fierce red-tailed hawk. Here was even more fun than Frisky had hoped for!

As soon as Mr. Hawk could stop his swift flight he turned and came back again. And there followed the liveliest sort of dodging for Frisky Squirrel. It was well for him that he had had plenty of practice all the spring, or I am afraid he would never have escaped.

He was not afraid. And now and then he laughed at Mr. Hawk. And now and then he shouted "Robber!" at him, and "Thief!" And he asked him how many of Farmer Green's chickens he had stolen lately.

But Mr. Hawk never once answered—except to whistle sometimes as he went sailing past. He paid strict attention to what he was doing. And he seemed to have no idea of stopping until he got Frisky Squirrel in his claws.

After a while Frisky began to tire of the sport. But not Mr. Hawk! He kept flying back and forth, back and forth, past Frisky. And his cruel eyes glared terribly every time he came near.

“You’d better go along home,” Frisky called to him. “You can never catch me, if you try till snow flies.”

Mr. Hawk lighted on a near-by tree and looked at Frisky. Frisky was a plump little squirrel and Mr. Hawk hated to give him up. But as he thought the matter over he seemed to decide that Frisky was a little too spry for him. And with one more whistle he mounted up above the trees and sailed calmly away.

Frisky Squirrel went home then; and he told his mother what sport he had had, and how Mr. Hawk had at last flown away in despair. “I hope he’ll come back again to-morrow,” said Frisky.

But Mrs. Squirrel shook her head. She wished that Frisky was less daring.

After he escaped from the fierce red-tailed hawk you would naturally think that Frisky Squirrel would have been glad to keep away from such a great, strong enemy. But the very next day found Frisky searching everywhere for that cruel, hook-nosed Mr. Hawk. He wanted more of that fine sport that he had had the day before, dodging and twisting around the limbs of the trees, while Mr. Hawk swooped down and tried to seize him. There was another reason, too, why Frisky wanted to find Mr. Hawk again—and that was because he knew that it annoyed Mr.Hawk very much not to be able to catch him. You see, Frisky Squirrel was a great tease.

Well, as I said, Frisky hunted all through the woods for the red-tailed hawk. But he couldn't find him. There was a good reason why—and that was because Mr. Hawk was waiting for Frisky in the top of a tree near Mrs. Squirrel's home. He was waiting and watching—was Mr.

Hawk. When Frisky had given up his search and was almost home he heard the smaller birds warning one another of the danger, telling of the savage old fellow who was half-hidden on a high branch of the tall elm. Frisky first heard a flicker calling to a towhee; and the towhee told a robin; and the robin told a little song sparrow that he had better keep out of sight unless he wanted Mr. Hawk to catch him. You may be sure that the little song sparrow was very careful after that. He gave a few *chips*, just to do his share in warning the other forest-people to look out for the red-tailed hawk; and then he crept into a thicket and kept just as still as a mouse.

When Frisky heard the news—for he knew what the birds were telling one another—he hurried along joyfully. *He* was not afraid of Mr. Hawk. Mr. Hawk was the very person he was looking for.

"Hello, you old ruffian!" Frisky called, as soon as he spied Mr. Hawk. It certainly was a very impolite thing to say, even if it *was* true.

Mr. Hawk turned his cruel eyes upon Frisky Squirrel and then he dashed toward him as fast as he knew how. He dropped down like lightning from his high perch, and Frisky had to dodge quickly to escape him; but that was part of the fun.

Frisky Squirrel laughed as Mr. Hawk went sailing by him. And then something happened—something Frisky was not expecting. He heard a rush through the air, and a nervous little wren screamed to him to look out. Frisky

didn't know what the trouble was; but he gave a great leap to one side.

He was just in time. He had hardly left the limb to which he had been clinging when Mr. Hawk's wife went coursing past. You see, Mr. Hawk had made up his mind that he was going to catch Frisky Squirrel, even if he had to bring Mrs. Hawk along to help him.

It was not long before Frisky Squirrel began to see that he had got himself into something very like a fix. It had been fairly easy to dodge Mr. Hawk alone. But things were quite different now. Mr. Hawk would come hurtling down upon him from one direction; and Mrs. Hawk would swoop down upon him from another. It was all very confusing, because Frisky could not watch both of them at once.

He called to his mother, because he began to be frightened. But Mrs. Squirrel was not at home. Frisky did not know what to do. He tried to reach his home in the big hickory tree near-by; but Mr. and Mrs. Hawk wouldn't let him go near it. And when he felt one of Mr. Hawk's sharp talons dig into his back Frisky thought that his end had come. But he escaped that time, though Mrs. Hawk nearly caught him just two seconds later.

I am afraid *The Tale of Frisky Squirrel* would have ended right here, if somebody had not come to Frisky's

help. Fortunately, there was a small, olive-green bird who lived with his wife not far from Frisky Squirrel's home. Mr. Kinglet was his name. And though he was a tiny fellow he had a heart like a lion's. I suppose that in all the country around Blue Mountain there was no braver fellow than he. And his wife was brave too. Although they both wore very dull-colored clothes, if you took a good look at Mr. Kinglet you could see that he always wore a bright red crown. He was very modest about his crown, and generally wore it so that only a little of it showed. But whenever he went out to fight, as the forest-people are often obliged to, that beautiful red crown might be seen as plain as could be.

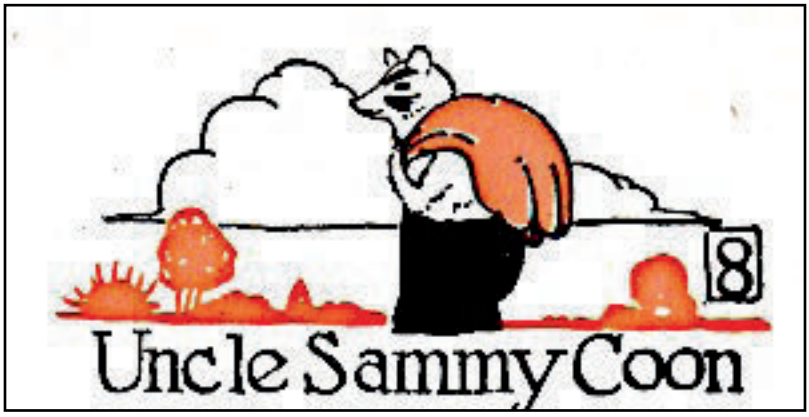
Now, it happened that Mrs. Kinglet heard Mr. and Mrs. Hawk talking to each other, as they tried to capture Frisky Squirrel, and she heard the other forest-people shouting, too. So she called to Mr. Kinglet that somebody seemed to be in trouble; and he came hurrying up at once.

When the little frightened wren screamed, Mr. Kinglet made up his mind that it was time for him to do something. And he pushed his red crown up on the top of his head where it would show better and he flew straight toward Mr. Hawk.

Mr. Kinglet flew up over Mr. Hawk's head, and then he darted down and lighted right in the middle of Mr. Hawk's broad back, and began pecking him as hard as he could with his sharp little bill.

Mr. Hawk stopped trying to catch Frisky. He had all he wanted to do to shake that bold little fellow off his back. And though Mrs. Hawk still swooped down at Frisky Squirrel, brave Mr. Kinglet's brave little wife began to fly at *her* so fiercely that Mrs. Hawk couldn't keep Frisky from reaching the tree where he lived.

He was very glad to get home, you may be sure. And he dived in through the door and was out of sight in no time. But pretty soon he stuck his head out again to see what was happening. Mr. and Mrs. Hawk had vanished. And all the forest-people were thanking Mr. and Mrs. Kinglet for driving them away. Frisky Squirrel thanked them, too. And when he remembered how he had sometimes teased Mrs. Kinglet by visiting her nest he felt very much ashamed, and he promised himself that he would never trouble her again.



One day Frisky Squirrel was looking for something to eat in the woods, when whom should he meet but Uncle Sammy Coon, a good-for-nothing old fellow who lived over in the swamp.
"Well, young man!" said Uncle Sammy, "what are you doing here?"

"I'm trying to find a few seeds to eat," Frisky explained.

"I know where there's some corn," said Uncle Sammy Coon. "It's last year's corn, to be sure; but it's good, just the same."

"Where is it?" Frisky asked him.

"Hm—" said Uncle Sammy. "If I told you would you get some of it for me? It would be easy for a spry young chap like you to take all you wanted of it. But I've a lame knee, you know, and I can't climb so well as I used to."

“Of course I’ll get some corn for you,” Frisky promised. “Where is it?”

“I’ll take you to it,” said Uncle Sammy—“this very night.” He was a suspicious old chap—which means that he was afraid that if he told Frisky then, Frisky would go off alone and take what corn he wanted without giving Uncle Sammy any.

“To-night!” Frisky exclaimed. “Oh, I don’t stay out late at night, you know, as you do.” Uncle Sammy Coon was known to keep very late hours.

“Well—right after sundown, then,” the old rascal said. “We’ll meet over by the brook. Don’t tell your mother. It will be a pleasant surprise for her, when you bring home a fine bagful of corn.”

“All right! I’ll be there,” Frisky told him.

And sure enough! Just as the sun sank out of sight that evening, Frisky appeared on the bank of the brook. And he hadn’t told his mother what he was going to do, either.

Pretty soon Uncle Sammy Coon came along. He had an old sack slung over his shoulder and a wide grin on his face.

“Come on, young man!” he said, “and we’ll go over to Farmer Green’s place.”

“Farmer Green’s!” Frisky cried. “I don’t want to go there.” He remembered the fright he had had when he fell into the flour-barrel in Farmer Green’s kitchen.

“You promised,” Uncle Sammy reminded him. “And unless you want something you won’t like nearly so well as corn, you had better march right along with me.”

He was so cross that Frisky Squirrel thought he had better mind him. But Frisky wished he had not come. And he wished he had told his mother what he was going to do, too. But he trotted along with Uncle Sammy —only he was careful not to get too close to the tricky old gentleman, for there was no knowing when Uncle Sammy might suddenly decide that he would rather have a nice, tender, young gray squirrel to eat than all the last year’s corn in the world. You see, the little forest-people have to think of many things—especially when they walk out alone with a person like Uncle Sammy Coon.

When Frisky Squirrel and Uncle Sammy Coon arrived at Farmer Green's place, the moon was just rising. It wasn't dark, but Uncle Sammy said that they would have no trouble at all, because Farmer Green's family would be in the house, eating their evening meal.

"There's the corn-house," he said, pointing to an old stone building. "There's a hole in the wall up there under the roof. All you have to do is to climb that tree, run out on that limb, crawl through the hole, and there you are—inside. Then you can bring the corn up to the hole, drop it out onto the ground, and I'll stay outside and pick it up and put it in this sack and watch out for old dog Spot."

"You see," he went on, "I'll be doing most of the work, for I'll be doing three things, while all you'll have to do will be to drop the corn out of the hole in the wall.... But I don't mind doing more than my share."

Frisky Squirrel couldn't quite understand how Uncle Sammy would be doing most of the work. But since the old gentleman said it was so, Frisky supposed it was the truth. There was one thing, however, that puzzled him still more.

"Have you brought a bag for my share of the corn?" he asked.

"Oh, we'll divide this bagful," said Uncle Sammy. "When we get over the hill we'll sit down and divide it."

"All right!" said Frisky. And then he hurried up the tree. In no more than a jiffy he was inside the old stone building; and pretty soon the corn began to patter, patter, down upon the ground where Uncle Sammy waited.

Frisky had been working steadily for some time. And he began to wonder if the bag was not full. He thought he would just peep out of the hole in the wall and see. So he stuck his head out. To his surprise, Uncle Sammy had vanished. And as Frisky looked all around he caught sight of Uncle Sammy Coon with the bag of corn on his back, hurrying up the road. For an old gentleman with a lame knee he was going at a very fast pace.

Frisky Squirrel wondered why he had run away. But he didn't wonder long, for a dog barked; and the bark came from right underneath the hole in the wall. Then Farmer Green came running up the path which led to the corn-house. He had a gun in his hand, too.

Frisky didn't wait to see anything more. He whisked out of the hole, and climbed the roof, and jumped into another tree on the other side of the corn-house. And soon he too was running like mad along the road—only he was going in exactly the opposite direction to that in which Uncle Sammy had vanished.

He never stopped running until he had reached the woods. And since he could not bring any corn home with him, he thought that there was really no sense in telling his mother anything about his adventure.

The next day, as Frisky was playing in a tree-top, he came across Uncle Sammy Coon sunning himself.

"Where's my corn?" asked Frisky Squirrel.

"Corn!" Uncle Sammy exclaimed, as if he had forgotten all about such a thing. "Oh! you mean that corn that we got last night. Now, I'm sorry to say that the bag was so heavy I had to drop it, because old dog Spot was after me, you know. And when I went back to get it, later, it wasn't there.... We'll have to try again, some other time," he added.

Frisky Squirrel began to see that the old fellow had tricked him. Uncle Sammy's sides looked very plump, as

if he had had an unusually good meal. And he smiled so pleasantly that Frisky Squirrel became very angry.

“You’ll get your own corn next time,” he snapped. And as he skipped away he heard Uncle Sammy Coon laugh heartily—just as though something had amused him.

Among all his friends, Frisky Squirrel liked to play with Jimmy Rabbit best. You see, Jimmy never wanted to eat him. He was so fond of tender young sprouts, and of Farmer Green's vegetables, that he wouldn't have taken even the smallest bite out of Frisky. He would have laughed at the very idea.

There was something else, too, about Jimmy Rabbit, that Frisky Squirrel liked; he was always thinking of new things to do—new places to visit, new games, new tricks to play on other forest-people.

To be sure, Jimmy and Frisky did not always agree—but that is not surprising, because their tastes were so different. For instance, there was nothing that Frisky Squirrel liked better than a hickory nut, while Jimmy Rabbit never would so much as touch one. But if anybody said "cabbage" to Jimmy Rabbit he would have

to stop playing and hurry to Farmer Green's garden. You see how fond of cabbage Jimmy was.

There were other things, too, on which Frisky and Jimmy held different views. They were forever disputing about ears and tails. Frisky Squirrel, as you know, had a beautiful, long, bushy tail, and short little ears; while Jimmy Rabbit had ears half as long as he was, and almost no tail at all!

"Really, Frisky, you ought to have that tail of yours cut off," Jimmy said one day. "It's terribly out of fashion to wear a tail so long as yours. As a special favor, I'll be willing to cut it off for you, with a big pair of shears that my mother has."

Frisky Squirrel was just a bit angry at this remark about his tail.

"What about your ears?" he asked. "Not one of the forest-people—except rabbits—wears his ears so long as you do. I must say that they look very queer. How'd you like to have me trim them for you?"

"Tell you what we'll do," Jimmy Rabbit said. "I'll cut off your tail and you'll cut off my ears. What do you say?"

Somehow or other, Frisky did not quite like the idea of losing his tail. He was so used to having it that he was afraid he might miss it dreadfully. And he even thought that he would rather keep it—even if it *was* out of fashion.

But Jimmy Rabbit ran home to get his mother's shears. And when he came back with them Frisky couldn't think of any good excuse for not letting Jimmy cut off his tail for him. As Jimmy came hopping up with the shears, Frisky Squirrel put out his paw.

"What do you want?" asked Jimmy.

"The shears!" Frisky said. "I'm going to trim your ears, you know."

"Oh—yes!" Jimmy answered. "But I thought of this *first*, you remember. So I'll cut your tail off first. Then you'll have your turn—see?" He kept a firm hold on the shears. And almost before Frisky knew what was happening Jimmy had stepped behind him and had placed Frisky's tail between the big shears.

"Will it hurt?" Frisky asked, as he looked behind him.

"It'll all be over in a jiffy," said Jimmy Rabbit.

It was just as Jimmy Rabbit had said. You remember that as he stood behind Frisky Squirrel's back with his mother's big shears, all ready to cut off Frisky's tail, he had told Frisky that "it would all be over in a jiffy"?

Well, it *was*. But things didn't happen just as Jimmy Rabbit had expected. He had taken a good, firm grip on the shears, and he was just about to shut them upon Frisky's tail with a snap, when somebody called Frisky's name. Frisky knew who it was right away. It was his mother! And like most of us, when our mothers catch us doing something we ought not to do, Frisky was so surprised and so startled that he gave a great jump.

That jump was all that saved Frisky's tail. For just as Mrs. Squirrel called, Jimmy Rabbit shut the shears together as hard as he could. But Jimmy was too late. When Frisky jumped, his tail followed him, of course. It whisked out from between the shears; and they closed upon nothing at all.

"Now, that's too bad!" Jimmy exclaimed. He had been so interested in what he was doing that he had never heard Mrs. Squirrel at all. "Come back here and we'll try again."

The words were scarcely out of Jimmy Rabbit's mouth when he received a terrific box on the ear. Now, it's bad enough for anybody to have his ears boxed. But Jimmy's ears were so big that I dare say it hurt him three times as much as it would have hurt anyone else. And it surprised him, too. For he hadn't heard Mrs. Squirrel as she stole up behind him. Anyhow, he ran off howling, taking his mother's shears with him.

"That awful Rabbit boy!" Mrs. Squirrel said. "A moment more and he would have cut off your beautiful tail—your best feature, too!"

"What's a feature, Mother?" Frisky asked.

"Why—your nose, and your eyes, and your ears—anything of that sort," Mrs. Squirrel said. "It makes me feel faint just to think what almost happened."

"But Jimmy Rabbit says long tails are out of fashion," said Frisky.

“Out of fashion indeed!” Mrs. Squirrel sniffed. “He’s jealous—that’s what’s the trouble with him. He wishes he had a fine, long, bushy tail himself. Goodness me! I’m all of a flutter—I’m so upset.” And poor Mrs. Squirrel sat right down and fanned herself with her sun-bonnet. “Now, don’t you ever let anybody try to cut off your tail again,” she said to Frisky. “You have your father’s tail. And everybody always said that he had the most beautiful tail that was ever seen in these woods.”

Frisky didn’t quite understand what his mother meant. If he had his father’s tail, then where was his? And if it was his, then where was his father’s? All the way home he kept asking himself questions like those. But whatever the answers might be, Frisky was glad that he still bore that beautiful brush. He began to see that he would have looked very queer, with just a short stub like Jimmy Rabbit’s.

Frisky Squirrel was very fond of wheat-kernels. Somehow or other he heard that there was a place on Swift River called the gristmill, where there was almost all the wheat in the world—at least that is what Frisky heard. So he started out, one day, to find the gristmill. He thought he could have a very pleasant time there.

Frisky had no trouble at all in finding the gristmill. It was just below the mill-dam. And everybody knew where that was.

The gristmill was an old stone building with a red roof. And once inside it Frisky saw great heaps of wheat-kernels everywhere. And there were sacks and sacks too —some of them stuffed with kernels, which Frisky was so fond of, and some of them filled with a fine white powder, which Frisky didn't like so well, because it got in his eyes, and up his nose, and made him sneeze. It was the same sort of powder into which he had fallen

one time at Farmer Green's house. It was flour, of course—you must have guessed that.

The gristmill was a quiet sort of building. There seemed to be nobody there at all. And Frisky helped himself freely to wheat-kernels, for it was very early in the morning and he had not had his breakfast. He was just telling himself what a delightful place the gristmill was, and how glad he was that he had heard about it, when suddenly there was a terrible noise—a grinding, and whirring, and buzzing, and pounding. The very floor trembled and shook, and Frisky expected that in another instant the roof would come crashing down on him.

He leaped away from the bag of wheat-kernels on which he had been breakfasting and he bounded through the great doorway and ran along the rail-fence, far up the road, thinking that each moment would be his last. For Frisky believed that the end of the world had come. And he never stopped running until he was safe inside his mother's house.

Mrs. Squirrel was not at home. And it was so long before she came in and found Frisky that he had begun to think he would never see her again.

"Whatever is the matter?" Mrs. Squirrel asked. Frisky was making adreadful noise, for he was crying as if he would never stop.

"It's the end of the world!" Frisky sobbed. "I didn't think you were coming back."

Bit by bit Mrs. Squirrel managed to learn where Frisky had been and what had happened to him. And she smiled when she found out what had frightened him. Since it was quite dark inside their home in the hollow limb of the big hickory tree, Frisky could not see his mother smiling. But her voice sounded very cheerful when she said—

"Now stop crying, my son. There's nothing to cry about. The end of the world hasn't come. And *that's* something you and I don't need to worry about, anyhow."

"What you heard was only the mill-wheels turning. You must have reached the gristmill before the miller had come to begin his day's work. That was why everything was so still. I don't wonder you were frightened when all that noise began. But gristmills are always like that. They make a terrible noise when they grind the wheat."

Frisky Squirrel stopped sobbing then. He was glad that his mother knew exactly what had happened. But he made up his mind that whenever he wanted any wheat-kernels to eat he would not go to the gristmill for them. Luckily the gristmill had not *quite* all the wheat in the world.

There was something about the dam across Swift River that Frisky Squirrel simply couldn't keep away from—after he had forgotten, somewhat, his fright at the gristmill. Only a few days passed after Frisky had run home from the mill in a panic, before he was back again. He liked to run across the top of the dam and look down at his reflection in the water on one side. Here and there a narrow stream spilled over the top of the dam. Frisky felt very brave as he leaped over those little rivulets. And he loved to watch them as they fell in thin, silvery cascades upon the rocks far below. It was great sport.

One day when Frisky reached the dam he heard a dog bark not far away. It was the miller's dog. He had seen Frisky as he crossed the road. And he at once hurried toward him.

Frisky Squirrel was annoyed. He had just been thinking what a good time he was going to have. But when that dog started to bark Frisky knew that his fun was spoiled.

He wasn't frightened. Oh, no! But he was sure that the dog would not go away until *he* did.

"Well, I'll just take one run across the dam," Frisky said to himself. "I'll stay on the other side of the river until he grows tired of waiting. And then I'll come back."

He hurried on to the bank of the river; and in a few moments he was skipping along the dam. The dog was still barking. And Frisky looked around at him. To his great surprise, there was the dog following him, right along the top of the dam. But even then Frisky was not frightened. He simply hurried a little faster. He had not dreamed that the miller's dog would chase him across Swift River. But there he was. And he was running fast, too.

Then something happened that really frightened Frisky Squirrel. At first he could hardly believe it. But it was true. It really was another dog that was barking—another dog that was waiting on the other side of Swift River. And almost as soon as Frisky saw him, that other dog started right across the dam, to meet Frisky!

There was no time to lose. Frisky had to make up his mind very quickly. He gave just one look at the deep mill pond. He could swim—if he had to. But he just hated to get wet. And he knew that the dogs were much faster swimmers than he was. So he looked away from the water with a shudder. And he peeped over the steep side of the dam and gazed at the rocks below, where the water splashed into countless drops.

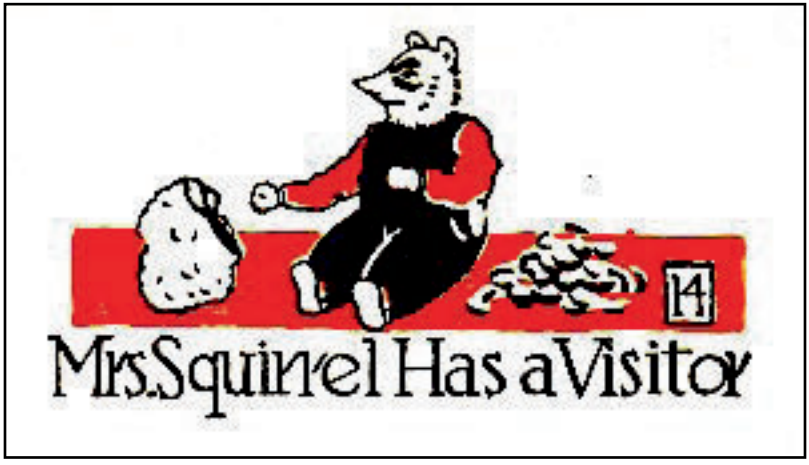
Fun on the mill dam

Those rocks were a long way beneath him. But there was one thing about Frisky Squirrel—he never was the least bit dizzy, or afraid, when he looked down from high places. Perhaps there were too many other things to be afraid of—such as coons and foxes—and dogs.
The miller's dog was drawing nearer now, because Frisky had stopped. And the dog from the other side of the river was only about six jumps away!

Frisky Squirrel didn't wait another instant.

He jumped right down the face of the dam. Where he had stood a moment before the two dogs came together with a bump. Probably they would have started to fight, if they had not been so interested in Frisky Squirrel. There they stood, with their necks stretched out over the edge of the dam, watching Frisky as he went rolling and tumbling down to the bed of the river. And when they saw him pick himself up and go skipping from stone to stone until he reached the shore and scampered away, they looked very foolish indeed.

In fact, they felt foolish, too. And without saying one word they turned about and each crept back to his own side of Swift River.



Fatty Coon was very hungry. And he stole along through the woods very quietly, hoping to find something to eat. To his great joy, it was not long before he discovered Mrs. Squirrel's home. He crept up to the nest silently; for he hoped to catch Mrs. Squirrel and Frisky inside. But Mrs. Squirrel and her son were both away.

Fatty was disappointed. But he made up his mind to go into the house anyhow, to see what he could find there. So he pushed through the narrow doorway. It was a tight squeeze; but Fatty managed to get inside. And there he found a fine lot of beechnuts, which Mrs. Squirrel had brought home and stored, in order to have something to eat during the winter.

Fatty Coon just loved beechnuts. And he squatted down on the floor and began to eat. He ate and ate until he

was half-buried in beechnut-shells. And he never stopped until he had finished the very last beechnut. He wished there had been more, though you would think he had had quite enough, for Fatty's sides bulged out so that he was rounder than ever. He smiled as he thought of the surprise Mrs. Squirrel would have when she came home and found her winter food all gone. And then he stood up, shook the shells out of his coat, and started to climb through the doorway.

Fatty was still smiling as he stuck his head through the opening in the tree. But all at once his smile faded away. You remember that he had had hard work to squeeze through the narrow doorway when he entered the house? Well, now his sides stuck out so far that he couldn't get through it at all. He tried and tried; but though he struggled hard, Fatty found that he simply could not squeeze through. He had stuffed himself so full of beechnuts that he was too big to get out of the hole. And there he was—caught fast by his own greediness! Yes! Fatty Coon was a prisoner.

Fatty had smiled because he thought Mrs. Squirrel would be surprised when she came home. And he had not been mistaken about that. When Mrs. Squirrel and her son Frisky scampered up the tree about sundown that evening they had the surprise of their lives—though not just the sort of surprise Fatty had expected.

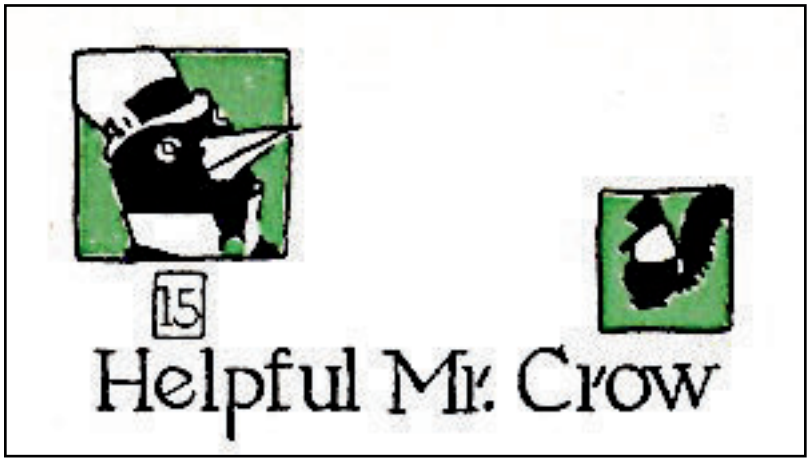
They looked in through their doorway and scolded. And they ordered Fatty to get out of their house at once.

He would have been glad enough to leave, you may be sure. But he couldn't go just then. And at last Frisky Squirrel and his mother had to go and spend the night in the house of a friend.

When they came back to the old hickory tree the next morning Fatty Coon had gone. He had tried the whole night long to get through the doorway. And at last—just as the sun was rising—he managed to slip out.

Mrs. Squirrel knew that Fatty had had a hard time, because he had left a good deal of his fur behind him. It clung to the sides of the doorway. And Mrs. Squirrel spent half the day picking it off and throwing the beechnut-shells out of her house. She was a very neat housekeeper; and she was quite annoyed to find her house upset.

As for Frisky, he began to bring home another store of nuts that very day. After what had happened neither he nor his mother had any fear that Fatty Coon would eve trouble them again.



Frisky Squirrel's mother had often told him not to have anything to do with Mr. Crow. "He's such a tricky old fellow!" she said. "He seems to have nothing to do but get folks into trouble. Don't go near him, and don't have anything to say to him."

Now, I'm sure Frisky Squirrel wanted to mind his mother. But he couldn't help feeling that she was mistaken about Mr. Crow. He was so solemn, and he always looked so like a preacher—for he usually wore shiny, black clothes—that Frisky Squirrel thought him a very nice old gentleman. And he told such interesting stories, too! Frisky could listen to him by the hour.

So, in spite of his mother's warnings, whenever he met Mr. Crow Frisky Squirrel would always stop and ask the old gentleman how his cold was. You see, Mr. Crow's voice was never what you would call *clear*. You might say that there was a decided croak in it. And very often,

even on hot summer days, he would have a muffler wound about his throat.

It happened that one day when Frisky came across Mr. Crow in the woods, something reminded Mr. Crow that he knew where there were plenty of butternuts—just waiting to be eaten.

"Is that so?" Frisky exclaimed. "Have you had some of them?"

"No! I don't care for butternuts," Mr. Crow said, with a slight cough. "I've always considered them bad for my throat. I've made it a rule never to eat them. You don't happen to like them, do you?"

Now, if there was one thing that Frisky Squirrel liked a little better than anything else, it was butternuts. And when he answered Mr. Crow's question he was so excited that his voice shook just the least bit.

"I'm *very* fond of them," he said.

"Well, well!" Mr. Crow exclaimed. "I'm glad I happened to mention the matter. They're there—heaps of 'em—great brown piles of 'em—thousands of 'em!"

"*Where* are they?" Frisky asked him eagerly.

"Oh—I thought I told you," Mr. Crow said. "Why—they're in Farmer Green's attic. His boy put them up there to dry. I saw them through the window, this very day."

Frisky Squirrel was disappointed.

“I mustn’t go to Farmer Green’s house,” he said.

“Pooh! Why not?” asked Mr. Crow.

“It isn’t safe. I went there once to get some cake, and I nearly lost my life in the kitchen.”

“Ah! But this is different,” Mr. Crow explained. “You don’t have to go into the kitchen at all. All you have to do is to climb that big tree close by the house. And you can hop right through the attic window. There’s nobody upstairs in the daytime. In fact, I should call it one of the safest places to go that I know of.”

When Mr. Crow said that, Frisky believed him. Mr. Crow was so old, and so wise, and so solemn, that Frisky thought that anything he said must be true.

“I’m going past Farmer Green’s house right now,” Mr. Crow told Frisky. “I have a little matter to attend to over in the cornfield. And if you want to come along with me I don’t mind stopping to show you where the butternuts are. But of course if you’re afraid—” Mr. Crow stopped to cough. He buttoned his coat closer around his throat. And then he looked sideways at Frisky Squirrel.

“Afraid!” Frisky exclaimed. “I’m not afraid at all.”

“Good!” said Mr. Crow. “Now, then, young fellow! You skip along over to Farmer Green’s and I’ll be waiting for you down the road a bit.”

Old Mr. Crow flapped himself away then. And Frisky Squirrel hurried off in a straight line for the farmhouse.

Long before Frisky Squirrel reached Farmer Green's place, he began to worry for fear Mr. Crow had grown tired of waiting for him. To be sure, he knew that the butternuts were up in the attic. But to tell the truth, Frisky felt uneasy about visiting the farmhouse. And he hoped that Mr. Crow would show him just how to get through the attic window, as he had promised.

Just as he came in sight of the farmhouse Frisky heard Mr. Crow calling to him from a tall tree close by the road. He was glad to hear the old gentleman's husky voice. And he couldn't help thinking how kind Mr. Crow was, and how mistaken his mother had been to believe that Mr. Crow liked to get folks into trouble.

"Come on!" said Mr. Crow, as Frisky paused beneath the tall tree. "I'm going to fly over to that tree right next the

farmhouse. You run along the stone-wall and climb up beside me."

"Now, then!" said Mr. Crow a few minutes later, when Frisky had joined him. "There's the window—wide open. And there are the butternuts, lying on the floor."

Frisky could see great heaps of nuts. And without another word he crept out on a limb that brushed the window-sill and in another moment he was inside Farmer Green's attic. Frisky forgot to thank Mr. Crow. He never once thought of that, he was in such a hurry to taste those nuts.

He just ate and ate and ate; and he was so busy cracking the nuts and picking out the meats that he never noticed that it was growing dark.

At last, to his astonishment, the attic door opened. Frisky leaped behind a pile of butternuts and hid, while someone walked across the floor. Then there was a bang. And Frisky shivered when he heard it. But the person left the attic at once and went downstairs.

Frisky Squirrel breathed easily again. And he stole out from behind the pile of nuts. Somehow, he did not care to eat any more. He wanted to get out of the house. So he went to the window. And then Frisky Squirrel was really frightened. The window was shut!

You see, while Frisky was so busy eating butternuts, a storm was gathering. And it grew so dark, and the wind howled

so shrilly, that Farmer Green's wife thought she had better shut the attic window, to keep the rain from beating in.

How Frisky Squirrel did wish he had minded his mother and kept away from old Mr. Crow! Poor Frisky looked out through the little square panes of glass. His friend Mr. Crow was nowhere to be seen. Frisky had hoped that the old gentleman would be waiting for him, and that since Mr. Crow had told him how to get inside the attic he would be able to tell him how to get out again.

The wind swept the branches of the tall tree back and forth across the window. How easy it would have been—if the window had been open—to hop out upon one of those swaying limbs! Frisky pressed his soft little body close against the glass and pushed as hard as he could. But he couldn't break out of his prison. It was a queer thing—that glass! He could see through it just as if there was nothing there; and yet it held him fast. Frisky could not understand it.

There were plenty of nuts in the attic of Farmer Green's house, where Frisky Squirrel found himself a prisoner. And you might think that he wouldn't have felt so unhappy to be there. But Frisky was unhappy. He was so frightened that he crept into a corner and stayed there, shivering, for a long time. And he couldn't have eaten a single one of those nuts if he had tried. He wanted to be free. He wanted to be out of doors. He wanted to go home.

After a time the storm passed. The wind stopped blowing. And the sun shone again. But nobody came to the attic to open the window. When it grew quite light Frisky did not feel so frightened. And at last he crept out of his corner and went nosing about the room, hoping to find a hole big enough to squeeze through.

Now, you must not think Frisky Squirrel was stupid, when I tell you that the door was open all this time. It was open just the smallest crack, for Farmer Green's wife hadn't quite closed it when she went downstairs. Frisky had been too frightened to notice it. Besides, the attic had been dark, you know.

Well, when Frisky found that crack he was the happiest little fellow you ever saw. It was only a narrow opening; but he slipped through it. And there he was, right at the head of the stairs! So downstairs he hurried. The door below was wide open. And in less time than it takes to tell the story, Frisky was in Farmer Green's kitchen. He remembered that room very well, for he had been there when he came to taste that white-frosted cake.

But this time Frisky did not stop to look for any cake. He just scampered across the floor toward the wide doorway. And as he bounded across the room something sprang out from behind the stove and started after him.

Frisky Squirrel saw that some animal had leaped at him. He didn't stop to take a good look; but he supposed that it was a small dog that had been drying himself by the fire. Frisky knew that dogs couldn't climb trees. So he sprang through the door, never touching the big stone doorstep at all, and hurried toward a tree in Farmer Green's yard. He laughed as he scurried up the tree-trunk. And then he looked down at his enemy.

Then Frisky Squirrel's heart almost stood still. That small animal was coming right up the tree after him! Of course, it wasn't a dog at all. It was Farmer Green's cat. Frisky had never seen a cat before and he began to wonder whether the small creature could fly, as well as climb trees. He scampered to the top of the tree; and then he leaped upon a branch of another tree close by.

No! The small animal could not fly. She climbed as high as she dared. And then she stopped. Her eyes glared fiercely; and her tail grew as big as Frisky's own. But that didn't help her at all. She could only sit there and watch Frisky Squirrel as he dropped from branch to branch, until she lost sight of him among the leaves.

One day, late in the summer, Frisky Squirrel saw something that caused him great excitement. Right into the center of one of Farmer Green's fields he saw Farmer Green's horses drag a queer sort of wagon. It was bigger than any other wagon he had ever seen, and had wheels upon it in all sorts of strange places, instead of just at the four corners, like all the wagons he had ever noticed before.

Frisky climbed a tree, in order to get a better view of what was happening. As he watched, he saw still another odd wagon hauled upon the field alongside the first one. This wagon carried a broad walk which led from the back and went right up what you might call a hill, to the front of the wagon. And there it stopped, with a wooden bar blocking the way. Frisky Squirrel thought that that was the strangest path he had ever seen, for it seemed to lead to nowhere, and why it should have a bar at the top, to keep anyone from going nowhere at all, was more than even his lively mind could puzzle out.

In and out and about these strange wagons were as many as a dozen men, and one boy—each of them as busy as he could be. And as for the boy, Johnnie Green, he was busier than anybody else. He seemed to be everywhere at once, and in everybody's way. And Frisky couldn't see that he was doing anything at all. But he noticed that Johnnie appeared to be having a fine time.

As Frisky Squirrel looked down upon this unusual sight from his perch in the tree he saw that Farmer Green's wagons—the kind Frisky had often seen before—were bringing up sheaves of wheat. And pretty soon—and this made Frisky's eyes almost pop out of his head—he saw a man lead a pair of horses up that short, steep walk and tie them to the bar at the top of it.

Then the horses began to walk. Now, probably you wouldn't think there was anything strange about that. But there was. The odd thing about that was that although the horses walked, they didn't get anywhere at all. So far as Frisky Squirrel could see, they just walked and walked, and that was all there was to it. After they had walked for a long time they still stayed right in the same place, tied fast to the wooden bar in front of them.

Now, when the horses were walking, the other wagon began to set up a great noise. It reminded Frisky of the time the gristmill began to grind, when he thought the world was coming to an end. Those queer wheels on the wagon began to turn, too. But Frisky didn't pay much attention to them. What caught his eye and kept him puzzling was those two horses, always walking, but never going anywhere.

Frisky Squirrel stayed in his tree as long as he could, until at last he simply had to hurry home and beg his mother to come over to the field with him.

As it happened, Mrs. Squirrel was not very busy that day, so she dropped her knitting, or whatever it was that she was doing, and pretty soon she and Frisky were up in the tree that he had climbed before.

“Oh! they’re threshing!” Mrs. Squirrel said, after she had taken one good look at what was going on. “They’re threshing out the wheat-kernels, so the miller can grind them into flour.”

“But those horses—” said Frisky. “Why is it that they don’t walk right against that bar, and break it, and tumble off onto the ground?”

“That’s a horse-power,” Mrs. Squirrel explained. “The path the horses are treading on moves, and that’s why they stay right in the same place. The path moves ’round and ’round all the time, like a broad chain. That’s what makes the wheels turn on the threshing-machine.”

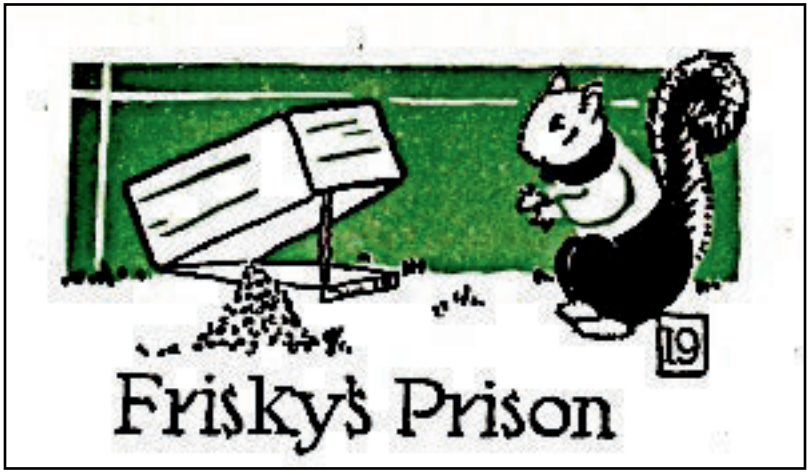
“It must be fun,” said Frisky Squirrel. “I wish I could be a horse, and make that horse-power turn like that.”

“Nonsense!” said his mother. “You’d soon grow tired of it.”

But Frisky Squirrel knew better.

Caught in the attic

Caught in the attic



Frisky Squirrel simply couldn't keep away from the field where the wheat was being threshed. He was on hand before the men came in the morning, and he was the last to leave the place at night. He ate all his meals right on the spot, and went home only to sleep.

Now, it was not long before Johnnie Green spied Frisky Squirrel loitering about the field. And he made up his mind that that young squirrel was altogether too bold. So Johnnie Green rigged up a trap, which he made from an old box, a few sticks, and a bit of string. And one noon, while the men were eating their lunch under some trees a little way from the threshing-machine, Frisky Squirrel was just reckless enough to steal up and try to get his luncheon too, by eating some of the wheat-kernels. He noticed a tempting little heap of kernels, right beside a little box. And he had just stopped to eat

them when all at once the box toppled over on him, and there he was—caught!

When Johnnie Green discovered that he had captured that young squirrel he was just as glad as Frisky was sorry and frightened. That, you see, is just the difference between *catching* and *being caught*. It makes a great difference whether you are outside the trap, or in it. And Frisky Squirrel was in it. No matter how hard he tried, he couldn't get away.

He made up his mind that if anybody tried to lift him out of the box he would bite him. But Johnnie Green had caught squirrels before. He pulled on a pair of heavy gloves, and all Frisky's biting did no good—or harm—at all.

When Johnnie reached home he put his prize into a neat little wire cage. As soon as Frisky found himself inside it he looked all around, to see if there wasn't some opening big enough to squeeze through. And sure enough! there was a little door. And in a twinkling Frisky had popped himself through it and had started to run.

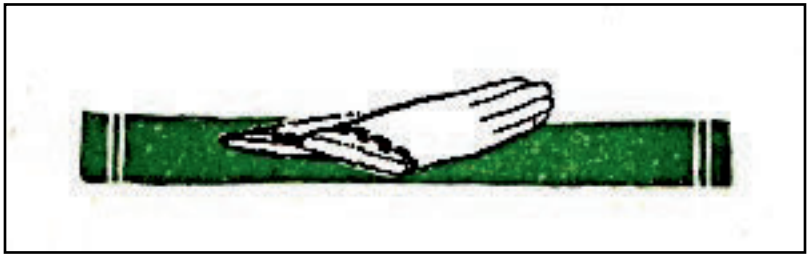
He ran and ran. But strange to say, all his running took him nowhere at all. At first he couldn't discover what was the matter. But after a while he saw that he was inside a broad wheel, made of wire. And when he ran the wheel simply spun 'round and 'round.

He stopped running then. For he thought of the horses that made the horse-power go. He was in just the same

fix that they were in. He could run as fast as he pleased, but he would still stay right there inside the wheel.

Poor Frisky Squirrel crept back into his cage. He remembered what his mother had said, when he wished he could be a horse, and make the tread-mill go. “You’d soon grow tired of it,” she had told him.

At the time, Frisky hadn’t believed her. But now he knew that his mother was wiser than he was. And he wondered if he was ever going to see her again.



Although Johnnie Green took good care of Frisky Squirrel, that once lively young chap did not like his new home in the wire cage at all. His young master gave him plenty to eat—nuts and grain—all the things that Frisky had always liked before. But now nothing tasted the same. Frisky never felt really hungry. He just sat in his cage and moped and sulked.

Once in a great while he would go out into his wheel, and run and run until he was so tired that he was ready to drop. Whenever Johnnie Green saw him running inside the wheel that young man would laugh aloud—he was so pleased.

But nothing ever pleased Frisky Squirrel any more. He grew peevish and cross and sulky. Being cooped up in that little wire prison day after day made an entirely

different squirrel of him. He longed to be free once more —free to scamper through the tree-tops, and along the stone-walls and the rail-fences. And at night he dreamed of hunting for beechnuts, and chestnuts, and hickorynuts, on which he would feast to his heart's content—in his dreams. But in the daytime, when his young master put some of those very same nuts into his cage, Frisky would hardly touch them. He lost his plumpness. His smooth coat grew rough. And his tail—that beautiful tail that Jimmy Rabbit had tried to cut off —alas!

it was no longer beautiful. It was thin and ragged-looking.

At last Johnnie Green began to be worried about his pet squirrel. And one day when Frisky refused to eat a single nut Johnnie Green thought that he must be really ill. So he opened the door of the cage, which he always kept carefully fastened, and forgetting all about his thick gloves he put his hand inside the little wire house, picked Frisky up by the back of his neck, just as if he were a kitten, and lifted him out of his prison.

Johnnie wanted to see if he could find out what was the trouble with the little fellow. He thought that perhaps he had a bad tooth, which prevented his eating. And Johnnie tried to look inside of Frisky's mouth.

At first Frisky kept perfectly still. He could hardly believe that he was outside that horrid, cramped cage. But it was true! And when Johnnie Green began to poke

at his mouth with a bare finger Frisky Squirrel thought that it was high time for him to do something.

So he did it. He didn't wait another second. Quick as a flash he sank his sharp teeth into Johnnie Green's finger.

Poor Johnnie Green! He gave such a yell that you could have heard him far away on the other side of Swift River. That was the first thing he did. And the next thing that Johnnie did was to drop Frisky right on the ground.

That was exactly what Frisky wanted. He no sooner touched the ground than he was away like a shot. It was not at all like running inside the wheel. Every leap carried him further away from Farmer Green's house. And he had crossed the road and disappeared behind the stone-wall before Johnnie Green knew what had happened.

For several days after that Johnnie Green had to keep his finger bound up in a bandage. And he felt very sad at losing his pet squirrel.

But Frisky Squirrel was not sad at all. And neither was his mother. At first, when Frisky tumbled inside her house she hardly knew him. For a long time she had almost stopped believing he would ever come home again. And now that he had come he was so changed that she could scarcely believe it was he.

The first thing that Mrs. Squirrel did was to set before Frisky some choice seeds which she had gathered that

very day. And Frisky ate every one of them. You see, he had found his appetite again.

For several days after that Frisky Squirrel did very little except eat. And it was surprising—the way he began to grow fat. His sides soon stuck out more than they ever had before, and his coat began to grow sleek and shiny. And as for his tail—though it took longer for *that* to look beautiful again, in the course of time it became just as thick and handsome as ever. Mrs. Squirrel was very glad of that. For Frisky reminded her of his father once more.

Almost everybody liked Frisky Squirrel, he was such a happy little fellow. But there were a few of the forest-people with whom Frisky never was able to make friends. *They* were the disagreeable, selfish kind, who never liked anyone except themselves.

Freddie Weasel was one of the few with whom Frisky Squirrel never could have a good time. Frisky often tried to play with him. But their games always ended in trouble; and I must say that it was not Frisky's fault.

Now, Frisky had often heard it said among his neighbors that no one had ever caught Freddie Weasel asleep. Indeed, Jimmy Rabbit claimed that Freddie Weasel never slept at all.

That seemed very strange to Frisky. He could hardly believe it. And he made up his mind that he would watch Freddie Weasel and see whether it was really true.

So one evening, just after sundown, when Frisky met Freddie Weasel in the woods, he thought it would be a good time to spy upon him. Of course it wasn't at all a polite thing to do. But Frisky was very curious. And anyhow, he meant no harm.

"Hello, Freddie!" he said, as he came face to face with the sly, slim chap.

"Hello, yourself!" said Freddie Weasel in a disagreeable tone.

"Where you going?" Frisky inquired pleasantly enough.

"Never you mind," Freddie Weasel answered. "And you'd better keep out of my way, or I'll bite your head off."

Frisky Squirrel didn't know what to say. Very few people —except Jasper Jay and one or two other quarrelsome forest-folk—had ever spoken to him like that. So he just stood still and stared.

That seemed to make Freddie angrier than ever. He darted toward Frisky and tried to bite his neck. But Frisky was quick, too. He ran up a tree before Freddie Weasel could catch him, and smiled at the bad-tempered fellow.

“You’d better go home and take a nap,” Frisky told him. “You’re crosser than ever to-day.”

Freddie looked up at Frisky as if he would just like to get hold of him for about one second.

“I never sleep,” he said. “I’m always awake. And some night when you’re dreaming, I’m coming to your house and I’m going to eat you.” And then he hurried away.

Frisky Squirrel ran down the tree and dashed after Freddie. He didn’t make any noise at all. And he was careful not to let Freddie see him. He was going to find out for himself whether Freddie stayed awake all night.

Mrs. Squirrel was worried because Frisky didn’t come home. Of course he ought to have let her know what he was about. But he felt that he mustn’t lose sight of Freddie. And he saw no one at all by whom he could send word to his mother as to where he was and what he was doing.

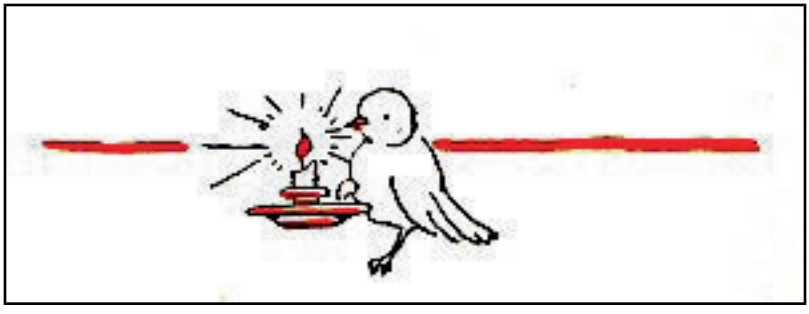
Frisky had the busiest sort of time following Freddie. It grew so dark that it was very hard to see Freddie Weasel as he sneaked along through the bushes, hunting for small birds that build their nests on the ground.

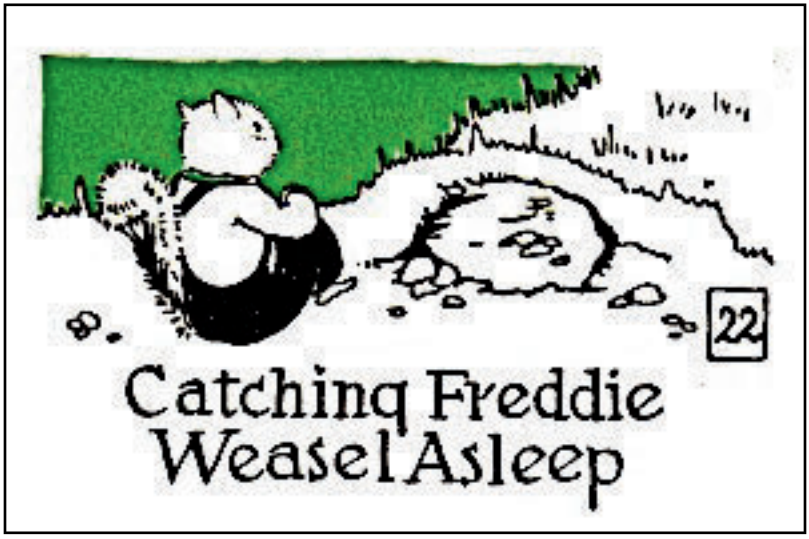
Freddie Weasel caught several sleeping birds. And Frisky could not help being sorry for them. He began to feel very guilty for having teased them, and for having eaten their eggs.

Finally it grew so dark that Frisky had just about decided that he would have to give up spying on Freddie

and hurry home, when he saw Freddie slip into a hole in a bank and vanish.

Was Freddie Weasel at last going to bed and to sleep?





When Frisky Squirrel saw Freddie Weasel disappear in the hole in the bank he became greatly excited. He forgot all about going home. And though he had begun to feel somewhat sleepy, he was wide awake again in no time. He sat right down, a little way from the hole, and he never once took his eyes off it.

Frisky hoped that perhaps he would hear Freddie snoring in there, if he waited long enough. But no such thing happened. There seemed to be but one way to discover whether Freddie was asleep, and *that* was to creep into the hole himself and find out.

Now, Frisky Squirrel was no coward, as you know. But he did not like the idea of crawling into that narrow, dark place. He knew that Freddie Weasel's teeth were very sharp. And he knew that Freddie was quick to use them, too.

Frisky was trying hard to think of some good way to catch Freddie asleep, when who should come strolling along but Henry Skunk! Frisky always supposed that he was called "Henry" because he was so fond of *hens*—for he visited Farmer Green's hen-house oftener than any other of the forest-people—but whether *that* was why he was so named I should really not want to say.

"Well, well! You're out pretty late," Henry Skunk called, as soon as he saw Frisky.

Frisky Squirrel held a paw to his mouth, so Henry Skunk would not talk too loudly.

"What's going on?" Henry Skunk asked, with growing interest. "You haven't seen a hen around here, have you?"

Frisky shook his head.

"It's Freddie Weasel—" he explained, pointing at the hole. "He's in there; and I'm trying to catch him asleep."

Henry Skunk came nearer.

"Why don't you go inside?" he asked.

Frisky shook his head again.

"I don't see very well in the dark," he said, "and I'd rather not."

Henry nodded.

"I can see first rate at night," he told Frisky. "I'll find out for you if Freddie Weasel is asleep. And if he is, I'll come right back and tell you, and then you can go in with me and see for yourself."

"Good!" said Frisky. "That's very kind of you, I'm sure."

So Henry Skunk walked up to the hole. It was entirely too small for him to enter.

"I'll have to make it bigger," he remarked.

"Won't Freddie hear you?" Frisky Squirrel inquired.

"I'll be very quiet about it," Henry Skunk replied. "So if he's asleep I hardly think I'll disturb him." And at that Henry set to work.

Now, in order to dig, he had to stick his head into the hole. But he knew he could see Freddie Weasel if Freddie tried to bite his nose; so Henry was not afraid. How he did make the dirt fly! Frisky wished that he could dig like that. He thought it must be great fun. And he watched Henry so closely that he never saw that slim, sneaking form that crept up behind him. And when Frisky felt something jump right on top of him, and when a terrible, sharp pain seized his shoulder, he was scared half out of his wits.

It was Freddie Weasel! He had left his home through another hole, which Frisky knew nothing about.

Frisky Squirrel called for help. He shouted Henry Skunk's name again and again, as he rolled over and over on the ground, trying to shake Freddie off his back.

But how could Henry Skunk hear him, with his head buried inside the hole? *He* didn't know what was happening. And if Frisky and Freddie hadn't rolled right upon him he probably would never have looked around until it was too late.

But when Henry felt that rolling, tumbling, fighting pair bump against him he drew his head out of the hole in a hurry. And as soon as he saw what was happening he sunk his own sharp teeth deep into Freddie Weasel's back.

Freddie let go of Frisky Squirrel at once. And he gave Henry Skunk's nose such a savage nip that Henry just had to squeal—it hurt him so. In order to squeal, of course he had to open his mouth. And when he opened his mouth he had to let go of Freddie Weasel.

That was exactly what Freddie Weasel wanted. He sprang up and dashed into the bushes. He was not afraid of Frisky Squirrel. But Henry Skunk was altogether too big. Freddie did not enjoy fighting *him*.

Well! Frisky, with his aching shoulder, and Henry Skunk, with his sore nose, went off together. They didn't say a word to each other, until they reached the hickory

tree where Frisky lived. And then all they said was "Good-night!"

Frisky never spied on anybody again. He had learned that it is better not to meddle in other people's private affairs. So, after all, perhaps it was a good thing that he tried, just once, to catch Freddie Weasel asleep.

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